TWO SLICK MEN

By DAVID FLEMING

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Hundreds of people knew Charlie Davids as a clubman having bachelor rooms and living in fair style. Not one man, however, could more than guess the source from whence his income was derived. He had been a captain in her majesty's service, but had been obliged to resign for lack of funds to go the pace. There were hints about a rich aunt at home, a richer uncle in Australia, some sort of an investment in the United States, but no one had any certain information.

Davids was a gentleman, and there was no doubt that he stood well with most mothers who had marriageable daughters. The men who hinted that there was anything crooked about the ex-captain would have been taken to task at once, and yet there was one man in London who firmly believed it and meant to prove it. That man was McNulty, an old Scotland Yard detective. On a certain occasion while he was piping off a receiver of stolen goods he got sight of Charlie Davids in confidential confab with the man. He did not know him then, but he at once set out to learn who he was. In the course of a few weeks he sat down and summed up his case as follows:

"Davids is crooked because he has business with 'fences.' His income is a liberal one, but cannot be traced to any honest source. At three different country houses to which he has been invited there have been robberies. He has got on to the fact that I am piping him off. I got his valet drunk and pumped him, and the man was promptly discharged. He will give me a long fight, but I will trap him."

Davids also sat down and reasoned.

"McNulty saw me talking with old Bones," he mused, "and that was reason enough for him to spot me. He has followed me on the street and pumped my man. He is evidently suspicious. He knows of the robberies, and while he cannot connect me with them he will set traps for me in future. Look out for McNulty."

From that day on for the next six months it was McNulty versus Davids—Davids versus McNulty. The fact that suspicion rested upon him even in the mind of one man served to make the ex-captain bolder than before. Four or five robberies occurred during the six months that left no doubt in McNulty's mind as to who was the perpetrator, and yet he could get no hold on the man he was shadowing. For instance, Davids accompanied Lord Rothsay home in a cab after the theater and a dinner. My lord was drowsy and couldn't tell who his friend was next morning. He had been robbed

HE SAW CHARLIE DAVIDS IN CONFIDENTIAL CONFAB WITH THE MAN.

of a watch, pin, rings and purse, but he would have knocked McNulty down had the detective suggested that Davids reaped the benefit of the plunder.

What the detective looked for was a straight case, and, being backed in it by the Yard, he was given all necessary assistance. It thus came to his notice that Charlie Davids was invited down to Squire Huntington's for two weeks' shooting, and he had a list of all other guests. Among them was Lady Isabel Gray, who never moved out of her own house without carrying a peck or so of jewelry with her. When it was suggested to Squire Huntington that some of the "fancy" from London might trouble him during the party he willingly permitted McNulty to establish himself in the house as a footman. A second man from the Yard was given a temporary berth in the stables and the new assistant parlor maid was one of the sharpest female detectives on the staff. They were after a slick man.

McNulty was so well disguised that his own wife didn't know him, and Charlie Davids walked smilingly into the trap prepared for him. Care was taken not to arouse the slightest suspicion on his part, and it was arranged without the squire's wife being any the wiser that his room should be the one directly above that of Lady Gray. He was athletic and nervy, and a sheet dropped from his window would enable him to enter hers. Temptation was to be thrown at his head, so to speak, while McNulty watched outside and the assistant parlor maid kept vigil in the hall. Lady Gray's rubies and diamonds were worth a fortune, and as McNulty thought of them he chuckled to himself:

"There isn't a man on top of this earth who wouldn't make a try for them under the circumstances. I am as sure to lay hands on Davids as I am to see the sun rise."

It didn't turn out so, however. Every night for seven nights the double watch was stationed and nothing came of it. On the afternoon of the eighth day, while the men were all in the covers shooting and the women scattered about the house, and while Lady Gray was lying down in her room for a brief nap, her whole outfit of jewelry was taken as if by invisible hands. Every male guest was in the field with gun in hand; every servant could account for his or her time to a second. Lady Gray's door was locked, and the jewels had been taken by some one finding entrance at the open window. A gardener had been engaged all the afternoon trimming a rosebush that grew under that window and a part of the time he had used a ladder. He declared that he had not left his work for a moment. He was searched and questioned, but even the chagrined and indignant McNulty believed in his innocence. Inquiries cautiously made in regard to Charlie Davids brought out the fact that he was a mile away at the moment the robbery occurred. The haul amounted to about £60,000, and Scotland Yard got the worst black eye it ever received.

Six months later the ex-captain, for good and sufficient reasons, took up his permanent abode in Paris. He had been there a year or more when he and McNulty met on the street one day. The detective was invited to have a smoke and a drink, and as they sat in Davids' luxurious quarters the baffled officer musingly observed:

"Davids, that robbery at Henderson's was a very queer thing. The slick one has got clear off with the goods and can never be meddled with, but I should like to hear what you think about it."

"I have often thought of the matter," quietly replied the ex-captain, "and it is quite clear to me. In the first place, the thief, whoever he was, spotted you in spite of your disguise. Then he got on to the other two. Then he saw that things had been made too easy. He waited till all the men were in the field, and then, although he was not missed, he slipped aside, donned the dress of a gardener and made for the house. He reached it as the man at work on the rosebush went to the barn for a moment to drink with the coachman. The man was not absent for five minutes, but he lied about it. In that five minutes the thief ascended to the room, got the box of jewels and descended and made off, and he was lucky enough to don his own dress, secure the box and rejoin the hunt without having been missed. Luck does attend some folks, you know."

"Y-e-s, I know it does," slowly replied McNulty as he nodded his head and drew at his cigar a little more vigorously.

"Anything else?" asked the ex-captain after a long pause.

"No, nothing else," was the reply. "I have accepted your view of the case, and I shan't let it worry me any longer, particularly as the thief is no longer living in England."

Rather Pointed Titles.

The following incident is told of a popular and well to do bachelor, who is a patron of a circulating library:

"I am going on a short trip, Miss Blank," he said to the young lady at the desk, "and want to take a couple of interesting novels, but I can't make up my mind which two to select. Couldn't you help me out?"

"I am afraid my selections might not prove interesting to you," replied Miss Blank.

"Just pick out two books for me and I'll guarantee to like them," he rejoined gallantly.

"Have you read Barrie's or Reade's novels?" she asked.

"No; get me one of each and I'll be satisfied," he replied.

She selected two and handed them to her spouseless acquaintance, who, after warmly thanking her for the favor she had done him, turned up the backs of the books and read these titles:

"When a Man's Single."

"It Is Never Too Late to Mend."—Philadelphia Ledger.

His Card.

Mr. Newrich, the dust contractor, having made a fortune, part of which he had invested in house property in the east of London, wished to rise, like a phenix, from his ashes into some sort of society. His golden key applied to the coffers of an impecunious aristocrat opened the way. His new friend among other things advised him that visiting cards were a necessity, and as a guide to drawing up one ready for the printer handed him one of his own, which read:

HAROLD DE VERE,
Iona House,
Portsmouth Square, W.

Two days later, as De Vere was sitting in his dressing gown at breakfast, a servant brought in on a salver a visiting card bearing the following:

EPHRAIM NEWRICH,
I own 23 houses,
London, E.

—London Fun.

The Fox and the Hen.

A Fox, having crept into an outhouse, looked up and down for something to eat and at last spied a Hen sitting upon a perch so high that he could by no means come to her. He therefore had recourse to an old stratagem. "Dear cousin," he said to her, "how do you do? I heard that you were ill and kept at home. I could not rest therefore till I had come to see you. Pray, let me feel your pulse. Indeed, you do not look well at all." He was running on in this impudent manner when the Hen answered him from the roost, "Truly, dear Reynard, you are in the right. I was seldom in more danger than I am now. Pray excuse my coming down. I am sure I should catch my death." The Fox, finding himself foiled, made off and tried his luck elsewhere.—Æsop.

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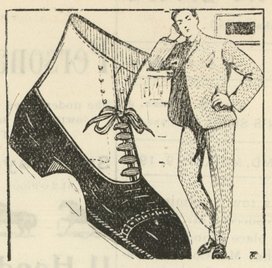

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n14-10t. F. P. & J. B. CANBY.

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JOHN JONES (Pleasant Plain.)
W. E. PARSONS (Ingleside).
R. J. NELSON (Wickliffe).
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n7 6m. Huntingfield Farm

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